1: Cohen E-4,5 (1956-1965) 1967 MS14 Kanuri MS14

throughout the emirate. Roads were built connecting the district capitals to Maiduguri, the major city of Bornu and to one another, and district capital markets came to be among the most active because of the increased population in the district capitals not producing their own goods.

In the economic sphere the colonial era sounded a death knell for the Saharan trade. A dribble of caravan trade still exists, but it was the express policy of the British to face Bornu around and turn its trade toward Nigeria and the Nigerian ports. Caravans were heavily taxed, and European trading companies were encouraged to move into Bornu and start circulating cash and cheap import goods. These few large English and French trading companies encouraged the appearance of a corps of Levantine traders who are ubiquitous in West Africa. They take credit from the large companies, giving it out again to large numbers of Africans who buy and sell for them. By the second world war ground-nuts were a well established cash crop, marketed through these companies although controlled by the government. When inflationary boom prices for ground-nuts hit Bornu after the war, the people were ready to take full advantage of it and there was a surge upwards of consumer buying, so that radios, bicycles, and many other industrial commodities became part of local life. On the other hand, judging by the surprise registered in the annual reports of the colonical officials, the government was a little stunned at first to know what to do with its increased revenues. However a host of new improvements began to be an accepted part of life in the public sector, just as new import items became common to the private sector. The most recent of such changes has already been mentioned in Chapter 1. After independence, the digging of deep wells increased the cattle population enormously and has provided a basis for further development in the area. This, then, is the Bornu background. It is a long and eventful one—and the people are proud of it. For an anthropologist, one of the most intriguing questions to ask is "why"—why has Bornu lasted so long in this area? Why has it adapted so well to modern times? It has absorbed Shehu Laminu's destruction of the Sefuwa dynasty, Rabeh's conquest, the colonial overlordship, and national independence in its calm stride. Its leaders and its people are remarkably stable—yet not enslaved by tradition. Indeed they strive to change and develop Bornu and their future is a bright and hopeful one. In the chapters to follow I hope to provide answers to these questions in order that we may ask them again after considering in more detail the quality of life in Bornu.

433 economic situation in Bornu is determined to a large extent by
439 changes in the world market price of export items which are now
433 a vital part of the local economy. The Kanuri are an agricul-
241 tural people whose staple crop is millet. Along with millet,
the main crop is peanuts, grown for sale and ultimate export.
[243] Every farmer grows millet for his family. Should he have a
[438] surplus he sells it in the local markets. Most farmers also
• 244 raise peanuts as well. The nuts are bought by local trading
[442]
[655] companies, acting as agents for the government controlled
[439] Groundnut Marketing Board which buys the entire crop and
433 sells it on the world market. Cow hides and sheep and goat
237
439 skins are also brought by the trading companies for export,
436 and represent an important part of the total economy. The West
African Pound is the basic currency unit and the shilling is
the unit of trade in the remotest sections of the province.
Maria Theresa dollars are still in evidence but are rarely used
as currency.

439 A network of European trading companies exists throughout
442 Northern Nigeria. Almost all of them have canteens run by
473 European agents scattered in larger towns throughout the region.
The largest of these is the United Africa Company, a subsidiary
of Unilever. Others, John Holt and Co., Société Commerciale du
Oest Afrique, Compagnie Française du Afrique Occidental, and A.
G. Leventis and Co., are multi-million-dollar companies with
[452] head offices in England or on the Continent. They all buy pea-
nuts, and hides and skins, and they buy through a complex system

243 ber is expected to last them for an entire year, and the months
221 of April, May and June are generally the hungry months, when the millet supplies begin to diminish.

244 Additional crops of some importance are varieties of beans,
243 okra, rice, melons, squash, tomatoes, cucumbers and onions.
312 These are frequently grown as garden crops, near places where there is a permanent water supply. They can then be watered by hand, or through the use of shadoofs to raise water from rivers to the higher banks.

244 Groundnuts are the primary cash crop of Northern Nigeria, and the Kanuri plant large quantities. Almost all Kanuri families, even those in the larger towns plant a crop of millet; in the villages, almost all plant a second crop of groundnuts
[492] as well. These are bought by agents of the larger trading com-
[434] panies for cash, and eventually are sold to the Nigerian Groundnut Marketing Board through which they are released onto the
433 world market. Millet is the basic subsistence crop of the Ka-
[334] nuri, while groundnuts are the primary source of cash for the Kanuri villager.

433 The Kanuri do not rely exclusively on agriculture. They
233 keep sheep and goats in their villages, which young boys take out beyond the fields to graze in the mornings, returning in the evening. Cows are kept, and fed by the same means, but
433 these are few in numbers. Certain Kanuri sub-groups, the Kwoyam
233 and the Buduwai, depend largely on cattle which they keep in
563

[GEIDAM]

491 dam with other towns first skirts the several canteens of the
[366] European trading companies as it enters the town, proceeds
across a wide open area of a mile until it reaches the town
361 proper, and terminates in a parking area. The town itself has
no wall, and no sharp boundary line marks its outer edges. In
three directions, south, east, and north, the town is bounded
by fields of millet, which begin immediately after the outlying
compounds end. To the west of the town lies the river Yobe,
but a strip of land about half a mile in width separates the
[249] river from the edges of the town. In that area are to be found
[134] garden plots, since the land along the river is particularly
[36] fertile, and, closer to the town, stock yards, the slaughtering
[233] area, and the cattle market, with its pens. Northwest of the
town is the tiny adjoining village of Koldi.

361 Southwest of the town, and south of the cattle market, is
648 the Government Reserve Area, a section of land reserved by the
colonial administration in every sizeable town and city where
Europeans are supposed to reside. It is physically set apart
from the African town. In this case, the sole government build-
ing is the Touring Rest house, over a mile from the town, high
on the banks overlooking the Yobe River. Another larger house,
remnant of a time when an army unit was stationed here years
ago, was rebuilt during the course of the year, and occupied
by the Governor-General of Nigeria, Sir James Robertson, during
a brief stay in Geidam. The Government Rest House is occupied
by British administrative officials in their tours of inspection

44 439 177 down the packages in which goods arrive, selling bundles of matches tied together or coca-cola bottles filled with kerosene, from their tables in the market-place.

[244] [297] [304] The export goods of the Geidam area are groundnuts, cowhides, sheep and goat skins and gum arabic. The same European trading companies that import the various sorts of goods mentioned above also handle the exports of the region, and the same network of Kanuri and Hausa tradesmen is involved in the collection and sale of peanuts and hides and skins to the trading companies, save that some tradesmen specialize entirely in dealing in hides and skins, while others deal only in groundnuts. Many of the important canteen owners also buy groundnuts as agents of the particular company from which they buy cloth, once the harvest season begins. This trade, too, involves the use of large amounts of credit which the trading company extends to its list of reliable and wealthy Kanuri traders (balaama) who have been dealing with the same company for many seasons. Long before the groundnuts are harvested, the agents of a Kanuri trader, trusted members of his household and relatives, go out into the countryside giving cash to the farmers who thus pledge their entire crop to a particular trader. When the crop is harvested, most of it goes directly to Kanuri middlemen who have distributed the cash advanced to them by the European trading companies, and through them the groundnuts come into [648] the hands of the trading companies. Eventually the entire groundnut crop of Northern Nigeria is sold to the Groundnut

44 439 452 244

[GEIDAM]

Marketing Board for whom the trading companies act as agents. The Kanuri trader who brings in a large share of the groundnut crop in the Geidam area to the particular trading company which has extended credit to him receives a commission and is assured that he will again receive credit from that company in the coming year. If he has succeeded in bringing in large amounts of groundnuts, he will receive more money to work with in the coming year. If he has not done well, or if the money advanced to him has been squandered by his "people" (usually the members of his household), then his credit will suffer and may even be entirely eliminated. Should that happen, his entire household would suffer.

Hides and skins and gum arabic are bought by Kanuri traders and sold to the trading companies in the same manner, except that there is no government Marketing Board dealing in these commodities so that the trading companies are not protected against a drop in the market price. Kanuri traders dealing in hides and skins work with a single company and are advanced cash by that company for purchases. Through their "men", who buy hides directly at the slaughtering area, these wealthy traders deliver the hides and skins to the trading company. Gum arabic is of lesser importance, and not all the European companies deal in it. If the world market price is high, they will make greater efforts to obtain a large portion of the crop.

This is the trade network through which the Kanuri economy articulates with the world economy, and in particular with the